

cotton's competitive position and to maintain and expand domestic and foreign markets and uses for U.S. cotton. The Cotton Board is prohibited from participating in any matters influencing governmental policies or action except recommendations for amendments to the Order.

Amendments to the Act were enacted on November 28, 1990, by Congress under subtitle G of title XIX of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. These amendments provided for: (1) importer representation on the Cotton Board; (2) the assessment of imported cotton and cotton products; (3) increasing the amount the Secretary of Agriculture can be reimbursed for conduct of a referendum from \$200,000 to \$300,000; (4) reimbursing government agencies who assist in administering the collection of assessments on imported cotton and cotton products; and (5) terminating the right of producers to demand a refund of assessments. The Act Amendments of 1990 were approved by a majority (60 percent) of importers and producers of cotton voting in a referendum conducted July 17-26, 1991, as required by the Act. Results of this referendum were announced in a nationally distributed press release dated August 2, 1991.

The Cotton Research and Promotion Act Amendment of 1990, Section 8(c) provides that once every five years after the July 1991, referendum, the Secretary of Agriculture shall conduct a review to ascertain whether a referendum is needed. In this referendum, producers and importers would determine whether they favor continuation of the amendments to the Order provided for in the Cotton Research and Promotion Act Amendments of 1990. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the Secretary of Agriculture should make a public announcement of the results of the review on September 24, 1996, (60 days after each fifth anniversary date of the referendum). If the Secretary of Agriculture determines that a referendum is needed, the Secretary of Agriculture should conduct the referendum by September 24, 1997, (within 12 months after a public announcement of the determination to conduct the referendum).

If the Secretary determines that a referendum is not warranted, a sign-up period to request such a referendum will be made available to cotton producers and importers. A referendum will be held if requested by 10 percent or more of those voting in the most recent referendum as long as not more than 20 percent are from any one State or importers of cotton. This sign-up period would begin approximately

November 25, 1996. A separate Federal Register notice addressing the sign-up period's exact date, time frame, and instructions will be provided. If a referendum is requested by the requisite number of persons, the referendum would be held by approximately February 23, 1998.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 2101-2118.

Dated: March 13, 1996.

Lon Hatamiya,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 96-6697 Filed 3-19-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Inviting Preapplications for Rural Technology and Cooperative Development Grants

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) announces the availability of approximately \$1.33 million in competing Rural Technology and Cooperative Development Grant (RTCDG) funds for fiscal year (FY) 1996. The intended effect of this notice is to solicit preapplications for FY 1996, notify applicants of RBS objectives and scoring system for FY 1996, and award grants before August 15, 1996.

DATES: The deadline for receipt of a preapplication is May 10, 1996. Preapplications received after that date will not be considered for FY 1996 funding.

ADDRESSES: Entities wishing to apply for assistance should contact Rural Economic and Community Development mission area (RECD) State Offices to receive further information and copies of the preapplication package. The program will be operated primarily by RECD at the State level.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Aurora Argueta, Acting Director, Specialty Lenders Division, Room 2245, South Agriculture Building, Ag Box 1521, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-1521, Telephone (202) 720-1400.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Refer to 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F, published in the Federal Register on February 2, 1996 (61 FR 3779-87), for the information collection requirements of the RTCDG program. This subpart provides details on what information must be contained in the preapplication package and eligibility information. It is essential that prospective applicants

refer to this information before developing a proposal.

The RTCDG program is authorized by section 310B(f) through (h) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1932). The primary objective of the program is to improve the economic condition of rural areas. The RTCDG program will achieve this objective by enabling program recipients to establish and operate centers for rural technology or cooperative development for promoting the development and commercialization of:

- (i) new services and products that can be produced or provided in rural areas;
- (ii) new processes that can be utilized in the production of products in rural areas; and
- (iii) new enterprises that can add value to on-farm production through processing or marketing.

The program is administered through RECD State Offices acting on behalf of RBS. RBS, formerly known as the Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service, is one of the successor agencies to the Rural Development Administration pursuant to the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-354).

RTCDG grants are competitive and will be awarded to nonprofit institutions and public bodies based on specific selection criteria, as required by law. Consistent with public comment, RBS has decided to emphasize certain policy themes each funding cycle. For FY 1996 funds, RBS desires to select projects that promote the theme of improved telecommunications capability in rural America. Administrator's points will be used for projects reflecting this policy theme as well as geographical distribution and interagency cooperation. Any project meeting the intent of the law and regulations for RTCDG will be considered, however.

The selection criteria, as outlined in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F, and assigned weights for FY 1996 are as follows:

- a. Likelihood of project being effective in achieving one or more of the following: technological innovation, adaptation of existing technology, cooperative development, commercialization of new services and products, and promotion of new processes and enterprises. (15 Points)
- b. Innovativeness or originality of project in addressing authorized grant purposes. (15 Points)
- c. Experience, organizational skill, and background that are needed for

applicant to successfully carry out project. (15 Points)

d. Transferability or demonstrated value of project to help rural areas outside of project area. (20 Points)

e. Ability of project to contribute to the improvement of economic conditions in rural areas with one or more of the following: few rural businesses and agribusinesses; high levels of unemployment or underemployment; high rates of out-migration of people, businesses, industries; and low levels of per capita income. (20 Points) *Applicants must provide data compiled by an independent party to support these conclusions. Applicants may use their choice of data as long as they reflect the intent of serving economically distressed communities and the data are from established official (or recognized) independent sources.*

f. Administrator's discretionary points to focus on telecommunications, geographical distribution, and interagency cooperation. (15 Points)

Fiscal Year 1996 Preapplication Submission

Due to the short preapplication period for FY 1996 funds, qualified applicants should begin the preapplication process as soon as possible. Preapplications must include a clear statement of the goals and objectives of the project and a plan which describes the proposed project as required by the statute and 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. Each preapplication received in the State Office will be reviewed to determine if the preapplication is consistent with the eligible purposes outlined in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F. The data provided by the applicant will be reviewed and a tentative score sheet prepared by the State Office based on published selection criteria and weights. Preapplications without supportive data to address selection criteria will not be considered. Copies of 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F, will be provided to any interested applicant by making a request to the RECD State Office or RBS National Office.

All eligible preapplications, along with tentative scoring sheets and the State Director's recommendation, will be referred to the National Office within 30 days following receipt of preapplication, and in no case later than June 10, 1996, for final scoring and selection for award. The State Director or his or her designee will provide comments on each preapplication forwarded to the National Office documenting whether the proposal promotes any of the policies set forth in this issuance. Any other comments

helpful to the National Office review are also welcome. The National Office will score applicants based on the grant selection criteria set forth in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F and weights published in this notice, and will select awardees subject to the availability of funds and the awardee's satisfactory submission of a formal application and related materials in accordance with this subpart. Entities submitting preapplications that are selected for award will be invited by the State Office to submit a formal application. It is anticipated that grant awardees will be selected by August 15, 1996. All applicants will be notified by the RECD State Office of the Agency decision on awards, and non-selectees will be provided appeal rights in accordance with 7 CFR part 1900, subpart B.

Dated: March 12, 1996.

Jill Long Thompson,

Under Secretary Rural Economic and Community Development.

[FR Doc. 96-6627 Filed 3-19-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-32-U

COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the Kansas Advisory Committee

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a meeting of the Kansas Advisory Committee to the Commission will convene at 3:00 p.m. and adjourn at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 9, 1996, at the Coffeyville Community College, 400 West 11th Street, Coffeyville, Kansas 67337. The purpose of the meeting is to plan future activities.

Persons desiring additional information, or planning a presentation to the Committee, should contact Melvin L. Jenkins, Director of the Central Regional Office, 913-551-1400 (TDD 913-551-1414). Hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact the Regional Office at least five (5) working days before the scheduled date of the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Commission.

Dated at Washington, DC, March 11, 1996.

Carol-Lee Hurley,

Chief, Regional Programs Coordination Unit.

[FR Doc. 96-6608 Filed 3-19-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6335-01-P

Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the Massachusetts Advisory Committee

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a meeting of the Massachusetts Advisory to the Commission will convene at 1:00 p.m. and adjourn at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 17, 1996, at the State House, Room 222, Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02133. The purpose of the meeting is to plan future activities.

Persons desiring additional information, or planning a presentation to the Committee, should contact Committee Chairperson Dorothy Jones, 617-623-5610, or Ki-Taek Chun, Director of the Eastern Regional Office, 202-376-7533 (TDD 202-376-8116). Hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact the Regional Office at least five (5) working days before the scheduled date of the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Commission.

Dated at Washington, DC, March 11, 1996.

Carol-Lee Hurley,

Chief, Regional Programs Coordination Unit.

[FR Doc. 96-6609 Filed 3-19-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6335-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

International Trade Administration

President's Export Council: Meeting of the President's Export Council

AGENCY: International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of a Closed Meeting.

SUMMARY: The President's Export Council (PEC) will hold a Full Council Meeting to discuss topics related to export expansion. The meeting will include briefings on foreign competitive practices, barriers to trade and other sensitive matters properly classified under Executive Order 12958. The President's Export Council was established on December 20, 1973, and reconstituted May 4, 1979, to advise the President on matters relating to U.S. trade. It was most recently renewed on September 29, 1995, by Executive Order 12974.

A Notice of Determination to close meetings or portions of meetings of the Council to the public on the basis of 5 U.S.C. 552b (c)(1) has been approved